

**Archaeological Evaluation at Goscote Hall,
Goscote Hall Road, Birstall, Leicester,
(SK 58940 08920)**

John Tate

**Planning Application no. 04/0263/2
Planning Authority: Charnwood Borough Council**

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N.B. North to top on figures.

**Archaeological Evaluation at Goscote Hall, Goscote Hall Road, Birstall,
Leicester, (SK 58940 08920).**

1. Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out within the grounds of Goscote Hall, Goscote Hall Road, Leicester (SK 58940 08920) on the 16th June 2005. This work was in advance of the proposed groundworks across the site which will involve the retention of Goscote Hall and its conversion into eight units, with three blocks of new build within the grounds accounting for sixteen further units (totalling 2201.3m²) and the provision of thirty-two car parking spaces. This work was carried out on behalf of LMP Consultants. Trial trenching revealed no features of archaeological significance, but did discover the foundations of some recent modern buildings in the south-east of the site. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services Section, accession number X.A.136.2005.

2. Introduction

2.1 This document constitutes the second stage of archaeological assessment to have been carried out at Goscote Hall, Goscote Hall Road, Birstall, Leicester. A desk-based assessment was carried out by EC Harris (2004) which indicated the limited potential for archaeological remains to be present at the site. The development area covers a total area of approximately 0.52 hectares. Currently it is not in use and both the hall and its grounds stand empty.

2.2 The site is in the district of Birstall, approximately 4km north of Leicester city centre in a predominantly residential setting. Goscote Hall itself is a Grade II Listed Building (since 1984), however since it was built in the early 19th century it has undergone a series of different uses, firstly as a house, then a hotel and most recently as a residential home. Currently the hall and grounds stand empty (EC Harris 2004).

3. Site Background

3.1 The site is in the parish of Birstall, approximately 4km north of Leicester city centre in a predominantly residential setting at NGR 458940 308920. A section of the Great Central Railway remains operational to the west of the site. The River Soar flows in a northerly direction approximately 1km east of the site (EC Harris 2004).

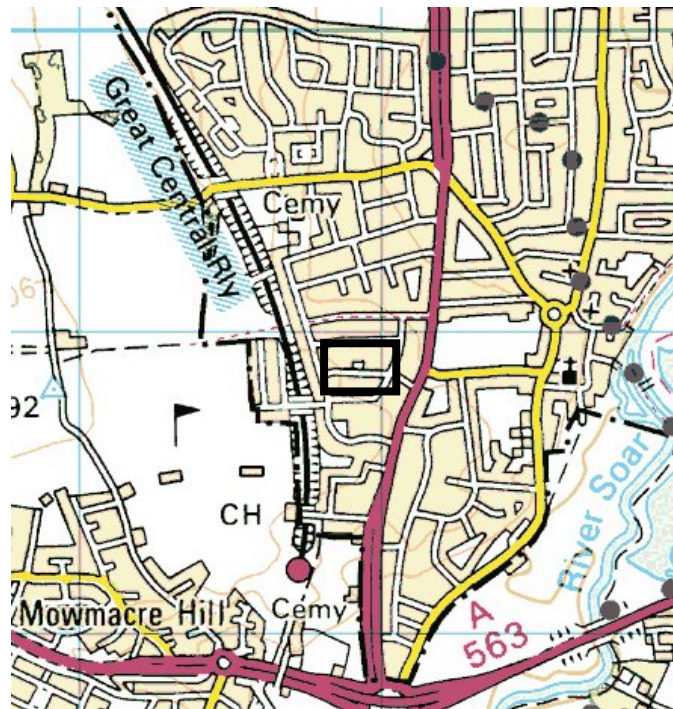


Fig. 1 Site Location. Scale 1:25000

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3.2 The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of drift deposits comprising glacial Boulder Clay. These glacial deposits are shown to overlie Keuper Marl of Triassic age, now known as the Mercia Mudstone group. These deposits are described as red marls with beds of sandstone and bands of Gypsum. The reddish colour of the soil probably gave the name to Red Hill.

3.3 The site lies at approximately 78m O.D. and has a slight slope towards the east. The site covers an area of c.0.52ha.

3.4 The roots of the village of Birstall can be seen within the Early Medieval period. The main evidence of this is within the church and the core of the village (EC Harris 2004).

4. Methodology

4.1 General Methodology and Standards

4.1.1 All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhered to their relevant *Standard and Guidance*.

4.1.2 The main objectives of the evaluation were:

1. To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To produce an archive and report of any results.

4.1.3 Topsoil/modern overburden was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by JCB 3C or equivalent using a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches were excavated to a width of 1.6m.

4.1.4 The Senior Planning Archaeologist had requested a c.70 sq.m sample of the area targeting the proposed new dwellings, the equivalent of three 10m x 1.6m and two 7.5m x 1.6m trenches. The location of services meant that the number and location of these had to be adjusted.

4.1.5 Trenches were examined by appropriate hand cleaning and archaeological deposits or significant natural deposits were to be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans have been tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

4.1.6 Sections were drawn as appropriate, including records of at least one longitudinal face of each trench.

4.1.7 Trench locations were recorded using an electronic distance measurer and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

5. Results

See Figure 2 for trench locations.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 Details

<i>Length of Trench</i>	9m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	14.4sq.m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.78m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.77.03m

Trench 1 was located in the very southeast corner of the site orientated northwest southeast. Topsoil was present in this corner of the site, but instead consisted of a mid reddish brown hard and gravelly demolition layer containing brick and organic matter to a depth of c.0.4m. This revealed a subsoil of mid greyish brown compact clayey silt with occasional sub-rounded stones for another c.0.4m. This revealed a mid reddish brown silty clay natural substratum with occasional sub-rounded stones or a pale blue-grey boulder clay with rare clumps of sand. Amongst the subsoil and natural lay the foundation for a modern building, of breeze-block construction. A plastic grey pipe and orange pipe were also discovered, but both out of use. A ceramic land drain was located 3.5m from the southeast end of the trench on the western side, and leaving the trench on the eastern side at 7.1m from the southeast end. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench.



Figure 2 – Application area showing trench locations.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 Details

<i>Length of Trench</i>	11m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	17.6 sq.m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.78m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.77.2m

Trench 2 was also located towards the southeast end of the site, 12m west of Trench 1, with orientation north to south. There is an easterly kink towards the northern end of the trench in order to avoid a plastic pipe of unknown function. Topsoil was not a true topsoil, but consisted of a light brown sandy loam with frequent modern inclusions i.e. brick, metal, hardcore, and was 0.12-0.38m deep, deepening towards the south end. This revealed in places a subsoil of light-mid orange brown sandy clay with rare sub-rounded stones. This only occurred in the southern end of the trench for a depth of 0.37m and length of c.2m. This revealed the same natural substratum as trench 1. Again, as in trench 1, breeze-block foundations were encountered, and a plastic pipe of unknown function. A ceramic land drain was seen towards the southern end of the trench orientated north south, and seen occasionally through rest of trench. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 Details

<i>Length of Trench</i>	7m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	11.2sq.m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.78m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.77.14m

Trench 3 was located 16m to the east of trench 2 and also orientated north south. This trench was short to avoid trees and services. The topsoil was a dark greyish brown clayey loam containing organic matter and bricks (towards the southern end). This more convincing topsoil was c.0.38m deep. This revealed a firm, mid orange brown sandy clay subsoil with some root disturbance and occasional sub-rounded stones for a further 0.32-0.52m. The natural substratum below this consisted of a mid brownish

orange calcareous clay with occasional stones. A large dump of bricks and other modern debris was discovered truncating natural to the southern end. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench.

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 Details

<i>Length of Trench</i>	13m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	20.8sq.m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.78m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.76.89 m

Trench 4 was located on the western side of the site, between the building and electricity services that ran through the site. This was 34m to the northwest of trench 3. The uppermost layer seen here was a dark greyish black powdery material that appeared burnt which contained brick rubble and modern debris. This overlay a brick floor surface of some kind in the southern extent of the trench for 8m. Topsoil in the northern end of the trench was a light id orange brown clay loam with frequent gravel and small sub-rounded stones. This was 0.2-0.48m deep. This revealed a bright brown yellow hard compact gravel 0.32-0.64m deep that seemed to be some kind of backfill of the structure that may have stood here. This existed south of the concrete beam which is at the very north end of the trench and the foundations seen at the very south end of the trench. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench.

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 Details

<i>Length of Trench</i>	6m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	9.6sq.m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.78m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.77.03m

Trench 5 was located 17m to the east of trench 3. The soil descriptions are the same as trench 3 for topsoil, subsoil and natural substratum. The topsoil was c.0.38m deep and subsoil c.0.24m deep. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench.

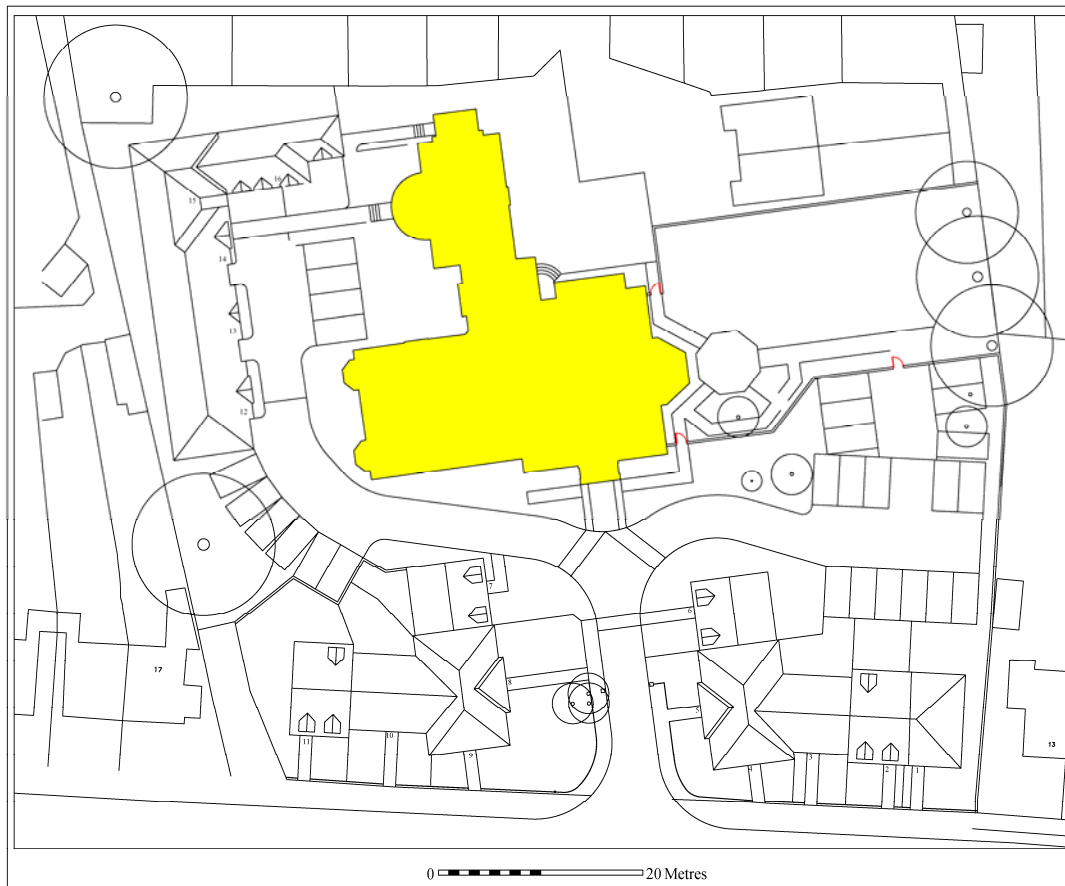


Figure 3 – Developers Plans

6. Discussion

6.1 No archaeological deposits or artefacts were discovered during the evaluation at Goscote Hall.

6.2 There was evidence that there has been extensive truncation of the grounds surrounding Goscote Hall in the recent past, particularly in the southeastern corner and west side of the development area. The only undisturbed ground was at the southern side of the site in an area of grass and trees that has itself disturbed the ground.

6.3 The only features of historical interest seen here were the ceramic land drains, which have an orientation north to south and presumably were once a part of an agricultural property and fields.

7. Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation within the proposed development area at Goscote Hall, Goscote Hall Road, Birstall was negative. No archaeological artefacts or features were discovered throughout the work.

8. Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services Section, accession number X.A.136.2005.

9. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank LMP Consultants for their assistance and co-operation on site. Patrick Clay managed the project, and the fieldwork was carried out by the author with the assistance of Mathew Parker, all of ULAS.

10. Bibliography

EC Harris 2004 *Desk top study report at Goscote Hall, Birstall, for Goscote Hall Estates Ltd.*

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Appendix - Design Specification

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for Archaeological Work

Site: Goscote Hall, Goscote Hall Road, Birstall,

Leicestershire

NGR: SK 5894 0892

Client: LMP Architects

Planning Authority: Charnwood Borough Council

Planning Permission: 04/0263/2

Non-Technical Summary

This document represents a design specification for archaeological building recording work and trial trench evaluation for: Goscote Hall, Goscote Hall Road, Birstall,, Leicestershire. The design specification includes building record which addresses the *Brief for Historic building Survey* (Leicestershire County Council 13.5.2005 hereinafter the ‘brief’) and follows the guidelines as laid out in the *Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures and field evaluations (IFA S&G)*.

1. Site Location and condition

- 1.1 The site is located on Goscote Hall Road, Birstall, Leicester, LE4 3AQ, centred on NGR 458940 308920 (SK 58940, 08920). It covers a total area of approximately 0.52 hectares (1.3 acres). Currently it is not in use and both the hall and its grounds stand empty. The site is in the district of Birstall, approximately 4km north of Leicester city centre in a predominantly residential setting.

2. Planning Background

- 2.1 The requirement for archaeological work is in accordance with PPG 16 “Archaeology and Planning” and PPG 15 “Planning and the Historic Environment”. The purpose of the work is to complete an appropriate level of historic building recording of the affected structures and their setting. This will pay specific attention to those elements where demolition/conversion and/or alteration are proposed. The work should be undertaken to a standard that will allow the future interpretation of the buildings within the context for which they were originally designed as well as later uses. An archive and report will be created as a result of the survey.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 A desk-based assessment has been undertaken by EC Harris (2004). Goscote Hall was listed in 1984. It is described as a 'Large house, early C19. Brick, with ashlar sandstone dressings, and Swithland slate roof. 2 storeys, 3 bays to each of main fronts. Entrance front has central stone doorcase of a plain order, with round arched fanlight and flanking small windows. The windows are 12-light sashes with lugged stone architraves. Deep eaves cornice with egg and dart moulding. Stone angle quoins. Big canted bay window in centre of garden front. Service wing to rear, with modern extension built out from its ground floor. The building is constructed in the Jacobean style in red clay facing brickwork with white brick decorative banding ashlar dressing and dutch gables'.
- 3.2 The potential of the below ground archaeology is unknown. Archaeological sites are known from the vicinity (EC Harris 2004).

4 Aims and objectives

- 4.1 The aim of the recording and interpretation is to enable the future interpretation of areas of the fabric to be removed or altered in situ within the context for which they were originally designed.
- 4.2 The potential impact of the proposed development on the fabric of the building will be assessed
- 4.3 The recording, once the above information has been gathered, help provide informed conservation decisions and/or suggest whether further stages of recording work are necessary.
- 4.4 The main objectives of the evaluation will be:
1. To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
 2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
 3. To produce an archive and report of any results.
- 4.5 Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.
- 4.6 Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

5. Methodology

5.1 Building Recording

- 5.1.1 The building recording will produce a record of all areas of fabric that are to be removed, irreversibly altered or demolished to RCHME level 2 prior to the commencement of demolition.

- 5.1.2 The building recording written account will be in accordance with RCHME level 2 items 1-7 (4-7 in summary form specifically as they relate to the areas being removed or altered). Sufficient details of physical evidence will be provided to validate interpretations.
- 5.1.3 The building recording drawn records will be in accordance with RCHME level 2 items 2-6 specifically as they relate to the areas of fabric being removed; item 2 will be a general ground floor plan at a scale of 1:50 or 1:100. Unusual constructional features will be recorded in greater detail at specified scales of between 1:1 to 1:50 where appropriate.
- 5.1.4 The building recording photographic records will be in accordance with RCHME level 2 items 1-6 and should cover all general areas specifically the areas of fabric being removed. Items 1-4 and 6 will be as appropriate to the areas of loss and alteration. All areas will be placed within the visual context of the site as a whole and a record will be provided of the interior and exterior of the building within the parameters of Health and Safety, to demonstrate its current form. The primary record will be in Black and white print and colour transparency format supplemented with digital and colour prints as appropriate.
- 5.1.5 The buildings assessment will be undertaken following the Institute of Field Archaeologist's Code of Conduct and will adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures*. (IFA S&G). The building will be examined under ULAS Health and Safety Policy (*ULAS Health and Safety Policy Statement and Health and Safety Manual*). A risks assessment form will be completed prior to and updated during the visit.
- 5.1.5 Unlimited access to monitor the project will be available to the Client and his representatives, the Conservation Officer, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, the Team Leader of the Heritage and Resources Team, Leicestershire County Council subject to the health and safety requirements of the site. At least one week's notice will be given prior to commencement of the recording work in order that monitoring arrangements can be made. All monitoring shall be carried out in accordance with the IFA *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures*.

5.2 Trial Trenching Methodology

- 5.2.1 All work will follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1999).
- 5.2.2 Staffing, recording systems, health and safety provisions and insurance details are included below.
- 5.2.3 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site by the project manager. These will ensure that project targets are met and professional standards are maintained. Provision will be made for external monitoring meetings with the Senior Planning Archaeologist, the Planning authority and the Client.

- 5.2.4 Prior to any machining of trial trenches general photographs of the site areas will be taken.
- 5.2.5 Topsoil/modern overburden will be removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by JCB 3C or equivalent using a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches will be excavated to a width of 1.6m and down to the top of archaeological deposits.
- 5.2.6 The trenches will be backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.
- 5.2.7 The Senior Planning Archaeologist has requested a c.70 sq.m sample of the area targeting the proposed new dwellings, the equivalent of three 10m x 1.6m and two 7.5m x 1.6m trenches. The location of these may vary depending on constraints on site.
- 5.2.8 Trenches will be examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located will be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establish the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans will be tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.
- 5.2.9 Sections of any excavated archaeological features will be drawn at an appropriate scale. At least one longitudinal face of each trench will be recorded. All sections will be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum, or a permanent fixed bench mark.
- 5.2.10 Trench locations will be recorded using an electronic distance measurer. These will then be tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.
- 5.2.11 Any human remains will initially be left *in situ* and will only be removed if necessary for their protection, under a Home Office Licence and in compliance with relevant environmental health regulations.
- 5.3 Recording Systems**
- 5.3.1 The ULAS recording manual will be used as a guide for all recording.
- 5.3.2 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto pro-forma recording sheets.
- 5.3.3 A site location plan based on the current Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map (reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO) will be prepared. This will be supplemented by a trench plan at appropriate scale, which will show the location of the areas investigated in relationship to the investigation area and OS grid.
- 5.3.4 A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made. Sections including the half-sections of individual layers of features will be drawn as necessary, typically at a scale of 1:10. The OD height of all principal strata and features will be recorded.
- 5.3.5 A photographic record of the investigations will be prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also

include 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

5.3.6 This record will be compiled and checked during the course of the excavations.

6. Finds and Samples

6.1 The IFA *Guidelines for Finds Work* will be adhered to.

6.2 All antiquities, valuables, objects or remains of archaeological interest, other than articles declared by Coroner's Inquest to be subject to the Treasure Act, discovered in or under the Site during the carrying out of the project by ULAS or during works carried out on the Site by the Client shall be deemed to be the property of ULAS provided that ULAS after due examination of the said Archaeological Discoveries shall transfer ownership of all Archaeological Discoveries unconditionally to the relevant Museum for storage in perpetuity.

6.3 Before commencing work on the site, a Site code/Accession number will be agreed with the Planning Archaeologist that will be used to identify all records and finds from the site.

6.4 During the fieldwork, different sampling strategies may be employed according to the perceived importance of the strata under investigation. Close attention will always be given to sampling for date, structure and environment. If significant archaeological features are sample excavated, the environmental sampling strategy is likely to include the following:

6.5 A range of features to represent all feature types, areas and phases will be selected on a judgmental basis. The criteria for selection will be that deposits are datable, well sealed and with little intrusive or residual material.

6.6 Any buried soils or well sealed deposits with concentrations of carbonised material present will be intensively sampled taking a known proportion of the deposit.

6.7 Spot samples will be taken where concentrations of environmental remains are located.

6.8 Waterlogged remains, if present, will be sampled for pollen, plant macrofossils, insect remains and radiocarbon dating provided that they are uncontaminated and datable. Consultation with the specialist will be undertaken.

6.9 All identified finds and artefacts are to be retained, although certain classes of building material will, in some circumstances, be discarded after recording with the approval of the Senior Planning Archaeologist. The IFA *Guidelines for Finds Work* will be adhered to.

6.10 All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner. Where appropriate they will be cleaned, marked and receive remedial conservation in accordance with recognised best-practice. This will include the site code number, finds number and context number. Bulk finds will be bagged in clear self sealing plastic bags, again marked with site code, finds and context numbers and boxed by material in standard storage boxes (340mm x 270mm x 195mm). All materials will be fully labelled, catalogued and stored in appropriate containers.

7. Report Preparation

7.1 The reports will contain as a minimum:

- non-technical summary
- introductory statements
- aims and purpose of the assessment
- methodology
- an objective summary statement of results
- conclusion, including a confidence rating
- supporting illustrations at appropriate scales
- supporting data, tabulated or in appendices

7.2 The report will be in A4 format and copies will be sent to the Client, LCC Heritage and resources team, SMR and Conservation Officer for Charnwood Borough council.

8. Copyright

8.1 The copyright of all original finished documents shall remain vested in ULAS and ULAS will be entitled as of right to publish any material in any form produced as a result of its investigations.

9. Health and Safety

9.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Archaeological Services Health and Safety Policy and Health and Safety manual (2001) with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate. The HSE has determined that archaeological investigations are exempt from CDM regulations.

9.2 A Risks assessment form will be completed prior to work commencing on-site, and updated as necessary during the site works.

10 Insurance

10.1 All employees, consultants and volunteers are covered by the University of Leicester public liability insurance with Gerling Insurance Service Co. Ltd. and others (leading policy no. 62/99094/D). Professional indemnity insurance is with Sun Alliance, policy no. 03A/SA 001 05978. Employer's Liability Insurance is with Eagle Star.

11. Monitoring arrangements

- 11.1 The production of the assessments will be monitored by the ULAS project manager.
- 11.2 All monitoring shall be carried out in accordance with the *IFA S&G: DBA* (section 3.5).

12. Staffing

- 12.1 The Building Assessment will be compiled by Matthew Godfrey. The evaluation is TBA. The project will be managed by Patrick Clay

13. Bibliography

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